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Transcription of Mountain pine beetle, wildfire hazard and community protection: Grand County, CO, June 2004, 2004-06

Collection: Streaming Media

Title: Mountain pine beetle, wildfire hazard and community protection: Grand County, CO, June 2004

Date: 2004-06

File Name: CSFS_GrandCountyMPB_Aug2004.mp4

Date Transcribed: November 2024

Transcription Platform: Konch AI

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

[00:05 - 00:10] Jen Chase: Change is natural in any ecosystem, especially in the fire dependent forests and the West.

[00:11 - 00:21] Dave Leatherman: We kind of have this expectation that, however the land was when we bought it, visited it, it's going to stay forever. And that's certainly not fair to expect of any living system.

[00:21 - 01:02] Jen Chase: One agent of change that is killing tens of thousands of trees in Northern Colorado, is a mountain pine beetle epidemic. This epidemic has elevated the wildfire hazard and demonstrates the need for community wildfire protection planning, where communities work together to determine priorities and take action to protect themselves. [pauses] Mountain pine beetle is a forest insect pest that kills its host tree and attacks new trees. Every summer, just west of the Continental Divide, Grand County has more trees dying from this bark beetle than any other county in the state.

[01:03 - 01:12] Craig Magwire: Mountain pine beetles are endemic to lodgepole pine and other pine stands. It's a part of the natural system. We get outbreaks periodically through time when the conditions are right. [♪]

[01:13 - 01:20] Jen Chase: The combination of drought and an extensive over mature pine forest, set the stage for a huge beetle outbreak. [♪]

[01:27 - 01:42] Billy Sumerlin: We're well aware that particularly here in Grand County, we're not going to be able to stop this mountain pine beetle epidemic. But what we can do is we can do mitigation work on private property, on the small scale, as well as larger scale, on the public lands. [🎧]

[01:45 - 01:55] Dave Leatherman: Insects lead to fire fuels. Fire suppression leads to insect epidemics. The two are intricately intertwined.

[01:55 - 02:03] Craig Magwire: One of our fears is that we're going to have a large fire, and in that area, that fire is most likely to propagate towards the town of Winter Park and Frazier.

[02:04 - 02:13] Charlie Henry: The potential is certainly for any community in this county to, to burn, to be not only have the forest around it burn, but to have homes and businesses in the town burn.

[02:15 - 02:34] Jen Chase: The lodgepole pine forest type has evolved and propagated itself with fire for thousands of years. So, there is always the potential for old lodgepole forests to burn in intense stand replacing fires. But the threat to life in homes is greater near beetle killed stands because fire often follows beetle epidemics in lodgepole pine.

[02:35 - 02:51] Craig Magwire: We realize that we need to be looking at our task on a much larger scale than we were in the past. A typical wedge management project here in the past would have been several hundred acres. We're now planning on a landscape scale and talking about treating several thousand acres at a time.

[02:52 - 03:00] Jen Chase: [crosstalk] Officials are reducing wildfire hazards through forest management on public lands, and are helping residents mitigate their own risks.

[03:01 - 03:11] Craig Magwire: The Williams Fork area and the Crimson Project are in a matter of 6 to 10 miles from the Fraser Valley. That's not as far as what the Hayman Fire ran in a day. [🎧]

[03:15 - 04:00] Jen Chase: Many of Colorado's lodgepole pine forests are old and susceptible to mountain pine beetle and wildfire. By removing patches of old, closely spaced trees, the natural cycle of fire is mimicked and new generations of pines can establish themselves in the open areas, resulting from logging. [🎧] By cutting patches of trees at different times, forest stands will vary in age, and because small trees are resistant to mountain pine beetle, the patches of young pines will survive this epidemic.

[04:03 - 04:14] Jim Hubbard: We don't have the distribution of age classes that we would like, but we'll have to do something about that, or nature will do it on a large scale that may not be acceptable to life and property. [♪]

[04:17 - 04:22] Jen Chase: Thinning young strands of lodgepole can also improve resistance to insects and disease.

[04:22 - 04:37] Charlie Henry: We didn't want to remove one more tree than was necessary, but the way the forest looks now is, is so encouraging. The impacts of drought and of the pine beetle are so much less than what we see in surrounding forests. We're really encouraged in.

[04:38 - 04:51] Craig Magwire: Their homes and amongst all that lodgepole pine now. And so we need to be taking some action to try to mitigate what mother nature might be trying to do. Obviously, if we're doing fuel reduction work, doing that along the private public land boundary is the most important.

[04:52 - 05:16] Jen Chase: Communities can help protect themselves from wildfire through a provision of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. This recent legislation states that any community can gain special consideration from the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, if it implements a Community Wildfire Protection plan. This plan prioritizes a community's desires for wildfire protection and lists actions to accomplish these objectives.

[05:17 - 05:28] Jim Hubbard: When you look at fire, in that watershed, on that landscape, you predict how it's most likely to behave. And then you, you plan your treatments according to that behavior.

[05:30 - 05:42] Ron Cousineau: Community Wildfire Protection Plan is going to enable communities to get work done more quickly by planning ahead, especially work adjacent to and within that Wildland Urban Interface.

[05:44 - 06:03] Jen Chase: The Wildland Urban Interface is an area where homes and forests meet. Communities implementing a community wildfire protection plan, define where their Wildland Urban Interface is, and the federal agencies within this area must give special consideration to the community's priorities as these agencies develop their own fire mitigation projects.

[06:08 - 06:19] Dave Leatherman: Compromising on all three issues, fire, beetles or log trucks, allows you to live with all three issues. And if you don't, you're probably going to have a wipe out from one of the three.

[06:21 - 06:37] Jen Chase: This example shows how natural events like insect epidemics and wildfire can have major impacts on communities. It demonstrates the need for community wildfire protection planning, and taking action ahead of time to reduce the impacts of cyclical forest disturbances that affect Colorado and the West.

END TRANSCRIPTION